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Item 97 of the preliminary list*

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL
ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Letter dated 19 April 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose a letter dated 19 April 1996 from the Chairmen/Coordinators of the Group of Least Developed Countries, the Group of Land-locked Developing Countries and the Alliance of Small Island States addressed to you (see annex).

I would like to request you to circulate the present letter together with its annex as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 97 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Reaz RAHMAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of
Bangladesh to the United Nations

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ANNEX

Letter dated 19 April 1996 from the representatives of the least developed, land-locked and island developing countries to the Secretary-General

The least developed, land-locked and island developing countries have been following with great interest and appreciation your unremitting efforts towards reorganizing and revitalizing the United Nations Secretariat, including the unit dealing with economic and social issues. We are fully supportive of the objectives of your endeavours and we are committed to providing our support thereto. We believe that the restructuring exercise will provide the Secretariat with great effectiveness in dealing with issues facing the 48 least developed countries, 29 land-locked developing countries and some 32 small island developing States (see attached list).

We are writing the present letter with a view to bringing to your kind attention our views on the future of the Division of Least Developed, Land-locked and Island Developing Countries, presently located within the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). This is the only unit in the United Nations Secretariat that deals substantively with the problems facing our three groups of countries in an integrated and comprehensive manner.

The Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Paris in 1990, adopted unanimously the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s. At its forty-fifth session, the General Assembly endorsed the Programme of Action and decided upon the level of resources for the task of follow-up to it throughout the 1990s. In consequence of the decision of the Assembly, the Division for the Least Developed, Land-locked and Island Developing Countries was established within the UNCTAD secretariat in early 1991. Following the Global Conference on the Substantive Development on Small Island Developing States, the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session requested that the capacity of UNCTAD be strengthened in order to support the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by that Conference.

Substantively, this Division serves as the focal point for the follow-up and monitoring of progress in the implementation of the Programmes of Action for these countries. The Division acts as the global-level focal point for the follow-up to the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s adopted by the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in 1990. It is charged with the implementation of the Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation between Land-locked and Transit Developing Countries and the Donor Community, endorsed by the General Assembly in 1995. It is also entrusted with the crucial mandate relating to the Barbados Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States adopted in 1994. The substantive analytical work on the issues raised in the Programmes of Action for these groups of countries are reflected in its various reports, in particular the annual Least Developed Countries Report. This is considered to be of immense utility and has won the admiration of Governments, the international

community and media alike. The Division assists our countries in negotiations in different international forums through substantive support; maintains the only database in the United Nations; is specific to the needs of these groups of countries; plays a strong advocacy role; mobilizes bodies of the United Nations system in favour of the implementation of their programmes of action; maintains substantive dialogue with Governments at United Nations Headquarters; and ensures that their situation and solutions to their problems remain at the forefront of the intergovernmental process.

In this regard and in the context of the reform and revitalization of the United Nations, it is the expectation of our three groups of countries that the Division for Least Developed, Land-locked and Island Developing Countries should be strengthened further, inter alia, through substantive appointment of a Director and if possible by enhancing its level of leadership. Indeed, the entire international community has unanimously expressed the priority it attaches to the development problématique of the least developed countries within the development activities of the United Nations. As you yourself emphasized at the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Mid-term Global Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s, held in New York last autumn, the United Nations system remains committed to the task of taking stronger actions in favour of the least developed countries, and UNCTAD must continue to play a strong leadership role in this area. This position had been echoed by others. The representative of the United States Government, speaking at the Trade and Development Board on 27 February 1996, said:

> "The United States believes that UNCTAD has a single purpose: fully integrate developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, into the global economy."

The representative of the European Union, speaking at the same meeting, emphasized that UNCTAD should concentrate primarily on the needs of the least developed countries. From the foregoing it is clear that there is unanimity of views that the activities of the United Nations in favour of these countries should be strengthened.

In the light of the above, we would like to urge you to ensure that:

(a) The institutional identity and integrity of the Division for the Least Developed, Land-locked and Island Developing Countries, located within the UNCTAD secretariat, should be strengthened;

(b) The analytical capacity of the Division should be further strengthened by the provision of adequate resources. The studies and the reports, including the annual Least Developed Countries Report and other important reports that the Division publishes and are considered extremely valuable by these groups of countries, should be maintained;

(c) A full-time Director of the Division should be appointed immediately and all other vacant posts of the Division should be filled on an urgent basis. Consideration should also be given to enhancing the level of leadership of the Division. You may also wish to consider consolidating activities by different

parts of the United Nations Secretariat under the Division of Least Developed, Land-locked and Island Developing Countries, which should enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

We are fully confident that the ongoing restructuring of the United Nations Secretariat under your leadership would result in a strengthened and more efficient institutional machinery within the United Nations Secretariat dealing with the critical situation of our three groups of countries.

(Signed) Reaz RAHMAN
Permanent Representative of
Bangladesh to the United Nations and
Chairman of the Group of Least
Developed Countries

(Signed) Luvsangiin ERDENECHULUUN
Permanent Representative of Mongolia
to the United Nations and Coordinator
of the Land-locked Developing
Countries on UNCTAD Matters

(Signed) Yvonne GITTENS-JOSEPH
For the Permanent Representative of
Trinidad and Tobago to the United
Nations and Chairman of the Alliance
of Small Island States

APPENDIX

Least developed countries

Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Comoros, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Haiti, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, the Niger, Rwanda, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, the Sudan, Togo, Tuvalu, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Vanuatu, Yemen, Zaire and Zambia.

Land-locked developing countries

Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Kazakstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mongolia, Nepal, the Niger, Paraguay, Rwanda, Swaziland, Tajikistan, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Alliance of Small Island States

Atlantic

Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau and Sao Tome and Principe.

Caribbean

Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

Indian Ocean

The Comoros, Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles.

Mediterranean

Cyprus and Malta.

Pacific

The Cook Islands,* Fiji, Kiribati,* the Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru,* Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga,* Tuvalu* and Vanuatu.

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* Not members of the United Nations.

South China Sea

Singapore.

Observers*

American Samoa, Guam, the Netherlands Antilles, Niue and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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* Not members of the United Nations.